

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-02

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 DODE-00

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O R 220555Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9241

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

S E C R E T WELLINGTON 0465

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, MPOL, SN, NZ, UK

SUBJECT: U.S. NAVY ACCESS TO STORAGE BASIN AND FUEL DEPOT

REF: (A) SINGAPORE 0671

(B) STATE 039185

(C) SINGAPORE 0711

SUMMARY: DEFENSE SECRETARY ROBERTSON STATES NEW ZEALAND NOT
AVERSE TO TAKING OVER SHIP BERTHS IN SINGAPORE BUT IS UNENTHUSIASTIC
TO IDEA OF RUNNING THE SENOKO FUEL DEPOT. GNZ WELCOMES USG
APPROACH AND WANTS TO DO ALL POSSIBLE TO BE HELPFUL. EARLY
INDICATION FROM USG OF EXTENT IT WILL ACTUALLY USE BERTHING
FACILITIES WILL HELP NEW ZEALAND TO DECIDE HOW TO PROCEED.
END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LONG MEETING FEBRUARY 22 WITH NEW ZEALAND DEFENSE SECRETARY
JOHN ROBERTSON, AMBASSADOR AND DCM CONVEYED USG INTEREST IN GNZ
TAKING OVER CONTROL OF SENOKO FUEL DEPOT AND SHIP BERTHS IN
SINGAPORE, AS SET FORTH IN PARAGRAPH 2A OF STATE 039185.
ROBERTSON RESPONDED THAT NEW ZEALAND RECOGNIZES THE STRATEGIC
IMPORTANCE OF THE SINGAPORE FACILITIES AND WARMLY WELCOMES

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USG EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN RETAINING ACCESS TO THEM. NEW

ZEALAND WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO BE HELPFUL. GNZ HAD AN OPEN MIND ON TAKING OVER THE BERTHS BUT WAS INCLINED NOT TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUEL DEPOT. IF NEW ZEALAND DECIDED TO OPERATE THE BERTHS, IT WOULD DEFINITELY EXPECT FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FROM THE USERS.

2. ROBERTSON SAID MAIN REASON NEW ZEALAND WISHED TO AVOID TAKING OVER DEPOT WAS THAT SENDING THE REQUIRED NEW ZEALAND MANPOWER TO SINGAPORE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY WITHIN THE GNZ. NEW ZEALAND'S FRIGATE WOULD USE DEPOT LESS THAN SIX MONTHS OUT OF YEAR. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, ATTEMPT TO KEEP MANPOWER IN SINGAPORE ON YEAR ROUND BASIS COULD BE SHOT DOWN IN GNZ. ANOTHER REASON FOR NEW ZEALAND RELUCTANCE WAS LACK OF NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE IN OPERATING OIL DEPOTS. ROBERTSON EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT SINGAPORE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONTRACT WITH GNZ AND USG TO PROVIDE AMOUNTS AND TYPES OF FUEL REQUIRED.

3. ROBERTSON SAID THAT DEPUTY CHIEF OF NEW ZEALAND'S DEFENSE STAFF BRIGADIER RON HASSET AND ROBERTSON'S OWN DEPUTY, RON LOFTUS, ARE IN SINGAPORE STUDYING NEW ZEALAND'S OPTIONS RE THE SINGAPORE FACILITIES. IN THIS CONNECTION, GNZ NEEDS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE INDICATIONS FROM AUSTRALIA, THE U.K. AND THE UNITED STATES, PARTICULARLY THE LATTER, OF JUST WHAT THE BERTHAGE REQUIREMENTS ARE LIKELY TO BE EACH YEAR. THIS WILL HELP NEW ZEALAND MAKE UP ITS MIND.

4. ROBERTSON VOLUNTEERED THAT SINGAPORE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF NATHAN HAD VISITED WELLINGTON LAST WEEK. NATHAN WAS REPRESENTED TO HAVE SAID THAT SINGAPORE WAS DETERMINED TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO HELP THE UNITED STATES BOTH ON BERTHS AND OIL DEPOT. NATHAN SAID THERE WAS NO POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR SINGAPORE WHETHER NEW ZEALAND RAN THE FACILITIES OR SINGAPORE DID SO ITSELF. ROBERTSON WILL ACCOMPANY NEW ZEALAND DEFENSE MINISTER FRASER TO SINGAPORE IN APRIL WHEN HE HOPES NEW ZEALAND WILL HAVE AVAILABLE ALL NECESSARY INFORMATION FOR MAKING A SOUND DECISION. ROBERTSON BELIEVED THAT GNZ WAS MOVING IN DIRECTION THE UNITED STATES WOULD WISH AND THAT HE WOULD KEEP THE AMBASSADOR FULLY INFORMED.

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5. ROBERTSON SAID THAT QUESTION HAD ARISEN IN SINGAPORE OF GNZ POSITION RE VISITS TO SINGAPORE OF NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIPS, TN THE EVENT NEW ZEALAND TOOK OVER SINGAPORE FACILITIES. THERE WOULD BE NO REPEAT NO OBJECTIONS FROM NEW ZEALAND AT ALL, ROBERTSON SAID. THIS WOULD BE A MATTER FOR SINGAPORE ALONE TO DECIDE.

6. COMMENT: NEW ZEALAND CLEARLY WANTS TO HELP BUT NO IMMEDIATE

DECISION ON ITS COURSE OF ACTION IS IN PROSPECT. ROBERTSON
SEEMED TO BE INTIMATING THAT U.S. NAVY MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN
AS FORTHCOMING IN PROVIDING FACTUAL DATA RE FACILITIES AS NEW
ZEALAND WANTS TO HAVE. ACCORDINGLY, WE RECOMMEND THAT
EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO PROVIDE COMPLETE BRIEFING'S TO NEW
ZEALAND OFFICIALS.
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